

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3125
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6273

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJ: LIKUD IN DISARRAY

1. DESPITE THE PREVAILING CONSENSUS THAT THE GOVERNMENT COALITION IS SECURE FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT SIX MONTHS OR EVEN A YEAR, SHORT OF BEGIN'S UNEXPECTED DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE, NEARLY ALL COALITION PARTIES (LIKUD, NRP, DMC) FIND THEMSELVES CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN BITTER FACTIONAL DISPUTES. THESE FACTIONAL CONFLICTS CENTER AROUND DISAGREEMENT OVER POLICY; FRUSTRATION THAT THE PARTY CADRES, INCLUDING MOST KNESSET MEMBERS, ARE BEING IGNORED AT THE TOP; REBELLION OF THE BRANCH ORGANIZATIONS OVER LACK OF RESOURCES AND PATRONAGE; A CONTINUING FEELING AMONG MOST OF THE COALITION PARTNERS THAT THEIRS MAY BE AN UNNATURAL ALLIANCE HELD TOGETHER MOSTLY BY A SENSE THAT NO ALTERNATIVE IS IN SIGHT; AND CONCERN THAT
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BEGIN AS HEAD OF THE COALITION AS WELL AS HEAD OF THE LIKUD AND HERUT HAS NOT BEEN ABLE OR WILLING TO DEVOTE ENOUGH TIME AND ATTENTION TO DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS. TO THIS HAS BEEN ADDED RENEWED CONCERN OVER WHO SHOULD OR COULD LEAD THE COALITION AFTER BEGIN.

2. THE NGP, WHICH IS CURRENTLY HOLDING ITS PARTY CONVEN-

TION, APPEARS LESS BESET BY INTERNAL CONFLICTS THAN THE OTHERS, WHILE THE DMC IS MOST SERIOUSLY DIVIDED AND CLEARLY THE WEAKEST MEMBER OF THE COALITION. HOWEVER, THE LIKUD FACTIONS (HERUT, LIBERALS, LA'AM) ARE ALSO AFFECTED BY SERIOUS INTERNAL CONFLICTS AS WELL AS INTERFACTIONAL RIVALRIES OVER THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY AND THEIR RELATIVE WEIGHTS IN IT. BOTH HERUT AND THE LIBERALS ARE FACING CONVENTIONS WITHIN THE NEXT SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS, WHICH AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF UNRESOLVED POLICY AND LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS TEND TO ENCOURAGE FACTIONAL INFIGHTING.

3. THE HERUT REMAINS THE MOST DISSATISFIED GROUP IN LIKUD. IT WANTS TO ASCERTAIN THAT BEGIN ASSURES IT A DOMINANT ROLE WHILE HIS AUTHORITY REMAINS INTACT AND HIS HEALTH HOLDS OUT. IT IS ALSO ENGAGED IN A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE BETWEEN WEIZMAN AND AN ANTI-WEIZMAN COALITION LED BY SHARON OVER WHO SHOULD INHERIT BEGIN'S POSITION. THE LIBERAL PARTY TENDS TO ACQUIESCE IN BEING NO. 2 IN THE PARTNERSHIP, BUT WANTS TO ASCERTAIN THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO SHAPE THE ECONOMY AND WILL EXERCISE MORE INFLUENCE NOT ONLY ON LIKUD, BUT ALSO ON ANY FUTURE COALITION WHICH IT MAY FORM TO LEAD THE GOVERNMENT IN THE POST-BEGIN ERA. EHRLICH, NOW BESIEGED BOTH BY LIBERALS WHO FEEL HE HAS COMPROMISED PARTY PRINCIPLES WITH HIS AGREEMENT WITH THE HISTADRUT AND BY DISSATISFIED HERUT ELEMENTS IS SEEKING TO SHORE UP HIS AUTHORITY AND LOOKS TO COOPERATION WITH WEIZMAN. LA'AM, IN TURN, IS SEEKING TO FORM A NEW FACTION

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OR EVEN A NEW PARTY, HOPEFULLY AROUND DAYAN, WHICH COULD ATTRACT ELEMENTS FROM BOTH LABOR AND THE DMC IN ORDER TO MODIFY LIKUD'S IMAGE AND QUALIFY THE ROLE OF THE HERUT MILITANTS.

4. AIRGRAM TO FOLLOW.
LEWIS

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NNN

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